

We Don't Have to Tell You How You Will be Judged, a new play
By Jake Alexander

CHARACTERS

TYLER, male-identifying, the festival manager, older but no one is quite sure how old he is, definitely dies his hair, a little (or a lot) shady

BRENT, male-identifying, thirty-something, the playwright and director and sole producer of the piece

SAGE, female-identifying, twenty-something, a seasoned actress just on the brink of big success, this is definitely beneath her but professional to a fault

TOMMY, male-identifying, twenty-something, is super-invested in "the art", just got into NYU's MFA program

PETUNIA, female-identifying, twenty-something, the stage-manager and only person doing anything backstage, has done the festival-circuits before and knows exactly what she's getting herself into

THE AUDIENCE, you, the reader, whoever

(Lights up. A theatre, any theatre. The space should be bare, almost no lights up at all. Just before a technical rehearsal for "untitled", a two-person show written and directed and selected for this particular fringe festival, but still one of about twenty-five shows. TYLER enters from the main-theatre entrance, mid-speech, followed by BRENT.)

TYLER

-seriously we were very excited that you submitted. We were very impressed.

BRENT

Well thank you again. And we appreciate you rescheduling our tech to now, you know-

TYLER

No problem at all.

(TYLER flicks on the lights. BRENT stares around the space. PETUNIA enters behind them, carrying more than she should.)

BRENT

Oh yes. She'll do very nicely.

PETUNIA *(to BRENT)*

She? It's not a boat, Brent.

BRENT *(to TYLER)*

Dressing rooms are backstage?

TYLER

Stage left. And you, little lady, will you be running the sound and lights?

PETUNIA

It's Tunny, and yes. My pronouns are-

TYLER (*ignoring her*)

Now we've got twelve sold for tonight. Are you expecting some at the door?

BRENT

Yes, as I said in the email-

TYLER

Great.

BRENT

It's about 60 in the house, yeah?

TYLER

Closer to 75.

BRENT

Wow. That's surprising.

TYLER (*a little too defensive*)

She can hold a lot. Why? Does she not look it?

BRENT

No, I just meant-

TYLER

It's not like you're going to sell out.

BRENT

Well, like I said, we are expecting-

TYLER

Right. Okay. So! Did we lose your cast?

BRENT

Oh, I'm sure they're on their way up. They were doing a line-through-

PETUNIA

They're coming. Where can I set up?

TYLER

You can follow me, little lady! Right this way. She's tight. But she gets the job done.

BRENT

Oh she'll get the job done!

PETUNIA (*almost a whisper*)
Why're you talking like that?

BRENT
Like what?

(PETUNIA rolls her eyes and follows TYLER to the booth, wherever that is in the space. BRENT walks into the space, glancing backstage, taking stock of the audience. He smiles, practices his bow (he won't be bowing, so it's not immediately clear why he's doing this). He practices a curtain speech.)

BRENT
I want to thank you all so much for coming tonight. This work has been a real labor of love, and there's so many people involved, who sacrificed so much to be here. This story is deeply personal, deeply emotional for me to share, and so I can't say enough how grateful I am of-

(SAGE and TOMMY are heard in the stairwell, bickering. They enter the space, cutting off BRENT's soliloquy.)

TOMMY
We never said that!

SAGE
Whatever.

TOMMY
Can we just focus on what we have to do today, for fuck's sake-

SAGE
Do **not** talk to me that way. I will not be man-splained to by a-

TOMMY
A what, Sage? A fuckin' what?

SAGE
Your tone is just, I cannot-

TOMMY
God you're infuriating.

SAGE
And what about it? Use this. Uuuuussee this.

(She takes his head in her hands. They are forehead to forehead. They speak in quiet whispers.)

TOMMY

You're right. You feed my artist's soul.

SAGE

Shhhh. Shhh. Sit in this. Use this.

SAGE/TOMMY

And I. Will. Hold. You. Up.

BRENT

You guys okay?

(They take the longest beat possible, as if they will become one through osmosis. After a moment, TOMMY turns to BRENT. SAGE centers herself.)

TOMMY

We are at peace. *(diving right into business)* How's it looking?

BRENT

You have your parents coming today, right?

TOMMY

No, not today. Thursday. That shows at 4:10pm right?

BRENT

Yes.

SAGE

Such weird times for a festival.

BRENT

Well, we were lucky to be selected.

SAGE

Is Tunny getting the rundown?

BRENT

Yes. Why don't you guys go get your stuff into the dressing room.

TYLER

We were talking-

BRENT

Not again. We don't have time.

SAGE
We do, Beenie.

BRENT
Sage, I would appreciate if we're in this space that you treat me with the professionalism you would of any director you've worked with before.

SAGE
Apologies. We want to go over the scene, though.

BRENT
We have talked and talked about this.

TOMMY
We don't have it yet. It's never been what it's supposed to be-

BRENT
As the playwright, I feel confident that we have captured-

SAGE
Tortoise!

(A beat.)

BRENT
What?

SAGE
That was the safe word. We all agreed to it in the first table work session.

BRENT
Right. So. Okay.

TOMMY
So what're the steps?

BRENT
If I remember the DEI and respect document we all signed off on, the first step is to stop speaking and give the floor to the person or persons who invoked the safe word.

SAGE
Which is me. So. I have the floor.

TOMMY
And the next step is to listen. So Sage. You have the floor and we-

TOMMY/BRENT
Are listening.

SAGE
I accept the floor and wish to express gratitude for the listening ears I am receiving. (*A beat. She centers herself*) Now. We feel-

TOMMY
I am sorry to interrupt but I would appreciate that you not speak for me.

SAGE (*taking his hand*)
I appreciate and acknowledge your request, and promise to work towards that goal. (*A beat. She centers herself*) *I* feel that the scene in question, from my perspective, could use a touch more work. We have spent time discovering and exploring the characters' motivations and now that we are in the space, we- fuck, sorry- *I* *I* *I* feel that we can take it to the next level. To a place of honesty and trust and love. To a high level of art. (*A beat.*) What's the next step?

BRENT
Follow up comments or questions from the community.

SAGE
Right. So. Are there any questions or comments from the community? The space is relinquished and open to all at this time.

TOMMY
You have to say you yield. The guidelines say you have to say.

SAGE (*annoyed*)
I mean "relinquished" is the exact same thing.

TOMMY
It's says, *very specifically* in the guidelines-

SAGE
Fuck. Fine. I yield.

(*TOMMY raises his hand.*)

BRENT
Yes, Tommy.

TOMMY
I feel that the space has allowed me to tap into something new. And while my partner did sort of passive-aggressively give me the space and time to speak my mind, I feel that I need to note that there's an intimacy that we can't grab in your apartment. And now that we are here, with the full

tech and are able to accurately capture the size of our audience, we can use this new...god, what would the word be...energy! I guess, it's energy. We can get that now. Let's grab that energy!
From the sawdust and the footlights!

BRENT

I told you repeatedly there wouldn't be any footlights.

TOMMY (*ignoring him*)

Okay. The next step is action items. Sage- do you have any?

SAGE

I would like to run the scene in the space.

TOMMY

Brent- do you have any?

BRENT

I want what you guys want.

TOMMY

Excellent. I have no action items to bring forth to the community. So. Final step is to vote. The vote stands as: do we want to run the scene in the space before tech begins? Sage- how do you vote?

SAGE

Aye. I would like to.

TOMMY

I vote aye, as well. And with a majority voting in favor, we will follow the action item. Brent- as director, you may start the rehearsal.

BRENT

All right. We will run it. Go put down your things, quickly. And grab an acting block while you're back there.

SAGE (*bowing*)

Thank you. (*she leans in and kisses BRENT passionately.*) Beenie, I love you and respect you and wanna fuck you. (*She let's go.*) Come, Tomas.

(*They exit offstage towards the dressing room. BRENT stands on stage alone.*)

BRENT

I fucking hate actors.

(*PETUNIA enters from the booth.*)

PETUNIA
Beenie, we're fucked.

BRENT
Tunny, we've talked about how I'd like you to address me-

PETUNIA
They have four presets, and no other options. I'm working with absolute shit up there. The dream sequence? We're fucked. Hope you like a blue backdrop with the work lights on.

BRENT
We can make it work. We **have** to work with what we have.

PETUNIA
And this fucking guy, this (*with absolute disdain*) Tyler. He's got no clue how outdated their system is. He's got half the board blocked off! How am I supposed to work like this?

BRENT
Tunny, breathe.

PETUNIA
And don't get me started on sound! He doesn't have a dongle! I didn't bring my laptop! What am I supposed to do with an iPhone and no connector? Just put my phone in a cup and **hope** the audience can hear Bach's fifth movement? How is the audience going to know that we have moved from the play-within-a-play to a straight farce? They won't get the commentary of gender politics that we are trying to make!

BRENT
Leave that up to the actors, they can work with whatever. If the piece is strong enough-

PETUNIA
If he calls me "little lady" one more time!-

BRENT (*grabbing her passionately*)
Tunny, sweetie, baby, pieface, I love you. Just breathe.

PETUNIA (*holding his face*)
You. Hold. Me. Up.

(*They kiss. TYLER enters from the booth.*)

TYLER
All right, got ya all set up in there. (*turning to BRENT*) Now, we hadn't talked about the producing fee yet.

BRENT

Right. I've got a check right here.

TYLER

Ah, a check?

BRENT

Yes?

TYLER

We were pretty clear in the contract, *and* our most recent e-blast, we will only accept cash.

PETUNIA

Cash?

TYLER

Yes. It's policy.

BRENT

A policy of cash-only?

TYLER

Checks make it, you know, sticky.

BRENT

Make *what* sticky?

TYLER

The tax codes for a space like this-, plus the winnings gotta be in cash, so you know it's easier to just handle everything with cheddar? You know? I'm a loosey goosey otherwise.

PETUNIA (*basically to themselves*)

How is any of this legal?

BRENT

Alright! No worries! I can just quickly run out and hit an ATM. I mean, I had the cashier check made out to the festival but that's no worries I bet they can just put that back in my account.

PETUNIA (*mostly to themselves*)

That's not how that works.

TYLER

And, since it's technically late-

BRENT

Late?

TYLER

Yeah, you had until your tech to pay.

BRENT

Well, tech has started yet.

TYLER

Right, but it's the day of, technically it's tech-day.

BRENT

We only have three hours before the first performance-

TYLER

Well you have *until* your tech, that's what the contract says. Section two, item B. It's right there if you need me to grab a hard copy, I can print one off.

BRENT

No, no that won't be necessary. No worries at all, I can just run to an ATM.

TYLER

You have Chase? You're not going to find one on this block, but the bar nextdoor has one. There's a small fee, but shouldn't be a problem.

BRENT

And you really can't take the cashier's check? It's basically cash.

TYLER

No, you know, tax purposes, 501-C3, etc. etc.

BRENT

Sure.

PETUNIA

A non-profit wouldn't take cash either.

TYLER

Your actors good to go?

BRENT

Just about! We want to run one quick scene, they feel-

TYLER

Ah. Look-

BRENT

No, no, I know, there isn't time to run the whole thing, but it's one small scene-

TYLER

Again, we are very clear in the contract, we need to do a full tech run, with all of your cues.

BRENT

I totally get it.

TYLER

If we don't get an accurate run time, you could be disqualified. You only have-

BRENT

I know, thirty-five minutes-

TYLER

And if you're even a second over that, you will not be allowed to win any of our fabulous prizes.

BRENT

I absolutely understand. This isn't me, it's the actors. They just really want to try this scene in the space, it's about spacing and timing and all that. This is bigger than what we had been rehearsing in.

TYLER (*absolutely tread-upon*)

I will make an exception *just this once* for you, because I like you and this little lady of yours. You run out and get that cash for me, and your actors can run their little scene, get a feel for the space and timing and whatever.

BRENT

Well, I really should be here.

TYLER

Patty here can help you out, I'm sure.

PETUNIA

It's Petunia- Tunny, really, and like I said before-

TYLER

See? This firecracker has got ya.

BRENT

Sure. Okay. Tunny?

PETUNIA (*fuming*)

Mhm.

BRENT

Alrighty. (*calling backstage to TOMMY and SAGE*) Hey, guys?

(*TOMMY and SAGE re-enter from backstage.*)

SAGE

We had talked about a more gender-neutral term?

BRENT

I have to run out real quick, you're going to run the scene with Tunny here, and then when I come back we will the tech. That sound okay?

TOMMY

I feel that-

BRENT

Tommy. That's the only way you guys- sorry, you *people*- can run the scene. Okay?

TOMMY (*absolutely annoyed*)

I guess it's fine.

SAGE (*to TOMMY, intimately*)

It's okay baby. I got you baby.

(*She takes TOMMY's face in her hands. They are forehead to forehead.*)

SAGE

Say it with me.

SAGE/TOMMY

I will. Hold. You. Up.

BRENT

Lovely. Okay. Be right back. Tunny, you're in charge.

(*BRENT exits through the doors to the lobby, grumbling as he goes. PETUNIA turns to the group.*)

PETUNIA

All right, where are we going from?

TOMMY

Top of page eleven, the start of the argument?

PETUNIA
Do you need anything?

SAGE (*setting an acting block dead center*)
Just give us a “lights up”. (*to TOMMY*) Do you want to warm up?

TOMMY
A quick connection exercise?

TYLER (*moving to the audience*)
...actors.

(TOMMY and SAGE grab hands, closing eyes.)

SAGE
To five?

TOMMY
Perfect.

(Nobody says something for awhile. Finally:)

TOMMY
One.

SAGE
Two.

TOMMY
Three.

(A long beat.)

TOMMY
Four.

SAGE
Five.

(They open their eyes. They face each other.)

TOMMY/SAGE
Kick ass.

(They take their places. SAGE is draped over the acting block. TOMMY stands directly in front of the audience, almost blocking SAGE. He spreads his arms wide.)

PETUNIA

Okay. All set? (*Silence*) Lights up.

SAGE

I've been giving it a lot of thought.

TOMMY

You've been giving it a lot of thought?

SAGE

You are so distant from me.

TOMMY

You're wrong.

SAGE (*suddenly out of the scene*)

Don't tell me I'm wrong!

TOMMY (*confused, trying to get back on track*)

I said "you're wrong".

SAGE (*to PETUNIA*)

Sorry, can we cut?

PETUNIA

What's wrong?

SAGE

We aren't *in* it.

TOMMY

Well, hold on. I'm *in* it.

SAGE

You know what I mean.

TOMMY

I promise I don't.

SAGE

Can we restart?

PETUNIA

Okay. Let's just try to keep an eye on the time, okay?

SAGE
From the top!

(They reset. TOMMY is flustered.)

SAGE
I've been giving it a lot of thought.

TOMMY *(slightly annoyed)*
You've been giving it a lot of thought?

SAGE
You are so distant from me.

TOMMY *(more annoyed, tense)*
You're wrong.

SAGE
I wish you'd look at me.

TOMMY *(practically biting)*
Are you even here?

SAGE
I couldn't be closer to you.

TOMMY *(suddenly out of the scene)*
Sorry I have to- are you fucking kidding me with this?

SAGE
What, what's wrong?

TOMMY
We're only getting farther from it. We have to start over.

PETUNIA
Guys-

TOMMY
People! This time we have it, Tunny, I promise.

SAGE
Do we need to reconnect?

TOMMY

No, babes, we got it. Let's just. Breathe.

SAGE

Okay. From the top. Tunny, can you give us "lights up" again?

PETUNIA

Sure thing. Reset? Okay. Here we go- "lights up"!

(They restart, this time it's different.)

SAGE

I've been giving it a lot of thought.

TOMMY

You've been giving it a lot of thought?

SAGE

You are so distant from me.

TOMMY

You're wrong.

SAGE

I wish you'd look at me.

TOMMY

Are you even here?

SAGE

I couldn't be closer to you.

TOMMY

Well maybe if you saw me more clearly.

SAGE

I've tried to see all of you, but every time you move further away.

(TOMMY takes a giant step away from SAGE.)

TOMMY

I couldn't be closer to you.

SAGE

How do you lie so well through your teeth?

TOMMY

Call me a liar one more time, bitch.

SAGE

I could fuck your brains out right now.

TOMMY

Well then let's do it.

(They begin a modern-style dance/movement piece involving sexual innuendo and while continuing the next part. The movement should not be sexual at all, despite what's said. They should say the below in complete straight tones.)

SAGE

You feel so good in me.

TOMMY

I can't believe how tight you are.

SAGE

If you don't cum on me I'll die.

TOMMY

Say my name.

SAGE

Say my name.

TOMMY

Say my name.

SAGE

Say my name.

(The continue with the above, in perpetuity, clearly trying to achieve "something", rather unsuccessfully. TYLER, watching, let's out an involuntary sound, clearly in disapproval.)

TYLER

Ehhhh.

(TOMMY and SAGE hear this, and immediately are pulled from the scene, totally not expecting that response.)

SAGE

The fuck?

PETUNIA
Is there a problem?

TYLER
I'm sorry? Oh, god, did I make a noise?

SAGE
Kind of a big one.

TYLER
I'm sorry, it was involuntary.

PETUNIA
Was there an issue? Have we gone over?

TYLER
No, no, nothing like that.

TOMMY
So?

TYLER
It was the scene. It's incredibly. Well. Nevermind.

TOMMY
Incredibly what!

TYLER
It just felt, I don't know, disconnected. Like, what's the point?

SAGE
"What's the point?"!?!

PETUNIA
Listen, maybe we should wait until Brent gets back.

SAGE
No, no, I wanna hear what he has to say.

TOMMY
Yes, by all means!

TYLER
Is that all right?

PETUNIA

I mean, that doesn't follow the DEI or action plan we created-

TYLER (*moving into the space, taking on a totally new position*)

Well, it's just so distant from one another.

SAGE

That's literally the point of the scene.

TYLER

But is it? I know that what you're saying in the script, so wonderfully-written by the way, big fan, but is that what you both *mean*? Really?

TOMMY

Can you say that another way?

TYLER

Get close. Get *really* close to one another.

TOMMY

Like right now?

TYLER

Yes!

PETUNIA

Seriously, maybe we should wait for Brent-

SAGE

No I want to try. This is "fresh eyes". Maybe that's what this scene needs.

TYLER

Get right in each other's face.

(They do so. They stare directly down the barrel at each other. They aren't touching but might as well be.)

TYLER

Good, now, do the scene again. None of the weird (*demonstrating some of the modern dance moves they did before*) just. Feel. The words. Now. Begin.

SAGE

I've been giving it a lot of thought.

TOMMY

You've been giving it a lot of thought?

SAGE

You are so distant from me.

TOMMY

You're wrong.

SAGE

I wish you'd look at me.

TOMMY

Are you even here?

SAGE (*changed*)

I couldn't be closer to you.

TOMMY

Well maybe if you saw me more clearly.

SAGE

I've tried to see all of you, but every time you move further away.

TOMMY (*affected*)

I couldn't be closer to you.

SAGE

How do you lie so well through your teeth?

TOMMY

Call me a liar one more time, bitch.

SAGE

I could fuck your brains out right now.

TOMMY

Well then let's do it.

SAGE

You feel so good in me.

TOMMY

I can't believe how tight you are.

SAGE

If you don't cum on me I'll die.

TOMMY
Say my name.

SAGE
Say my name.

TOMMY
Say my name.

SAGE
Say my name.

(They continue. They practically on edge of orgasm. They could literally explode at any minute: breathing, panting, wanting. Suddenly, TYLER bursts into applause. Just as this happens, BRENT walks through the door. He stands there, stunned.)

TYLER
That's it! Don't stop!

SAGE
Wow.

TOMMY
I mean-

TYLER
The connection! Did you feel it??

TOMMY *(to SAGE)*
You were so-

SAGE
God, you too.

BRENT
What's happening here?

PETUNIA
Oh thank god, Beenie, we started the rehearsal and then-

TYLER
I hope you don't mind, my guy, I just felt the scene needed some connection. Friction. HEAT.

BRENT

Uhm, I mean when I wrote it-

TYLER

It's a beautiful script, you have no idea. I've never laid ears on writing like this before. I felt like a newborn babe, fresh with dew, cresting and falling and cresting and falling.

BRENT (*uncomfortably*)

Thank you?

TYLER (*to SAGE and TOMMY*)

Did you feel that? I mean did you *feel* that?

TOMMY

Can I speak my truth?

SAGE

God, yes, angel.

TOMMY

I was edging so hard I almost passed out.

SAGE

Yes. Artistically I was like (*humps the air, but gently*) right there with you.

TOMMY

I could eat you alive right now.

SAGE

Feed on me baby. Feed. On. Me.

TOMMY (*turning to TYLER, with newfound respect*)

You know, I'm about to start the Alexander Technique at NYU. NYU Tisch. The MFA at New York University. You know it? And there's an amazing chapter that I'm reading right now in Uta. Uta Hagen? Her book about breath and connection and how the closest we can get to ourselves in our breathing, and I just feel so transported.

TYLER

I almost went to NYU. But I turned them down. The politics of it all, you know?

BRENT

Can we get back to the scene, because I know we have to start tech-

TYLER

Bucky, kid, they got this now. I think you should see what they were able to capture.

BRENT (*on the verge of going off, through gritted teeth but polite*)

Would you actually...sorry. Can we have a moment? I really want to start tech. Tunny, you said you had some questions about the festival for Tyler, didn't you?

PETUNIA (*quietly, to BRENT*)
I'm begging you not to leave me alone with him.

BRENT (*quietly*)
Please, I have to get these fuckers back under control.

PETUNIA (*resigned*)
Fine. But *you're* on top tonight.

BRENT
Yes. Fine. Whatever.

PETUNIA
And no neck-kissing.

BRENT
Okay. Just go.

PETUNIA (*starting to exit back to the tech booth*)
Tyler, maybe you could show me the light board one more time. My *little brain* just couldn't hold all the info in.

TYLER
I'm sure. Follow me. (*to BRENT*) Before I forget, you got that cash?

BRENT (*handing him an envelope*)
Oh. Yes. Here you go.

TYLER
Gotta count this. I don't trust robots to give us our twenties in the right amount, you know?

BRENT
Right. Tunny?

PETUNIA (*interrupting*)
And you know, while we're at it I'd love to hear more about how the festival was founded. You said you started it in 2017?

TYLER
2018. 2017 was when my divorce was finalized. Hey, you two? (*To SAGE and TOMMY*)
Remember? Connection. HEAT.

(They both exit, BRENT turns furiously towards his actors.)

BRENT
What the fuck?

SAGE
Wow. The anger that you are giving off right now. I can't meet you there.

BRENT
Why would you let him give you notes.

TOMMY
Honestly, he had good feedback, Beenie.

BRENT
Do. NOT. Call me that.

TOMMY
He did! And like Uta says-

BRENT
You don't start until the fall, let's give it a rest. Sage?

SAGE
Listen. I can't talk to you when you're like this.

BRENT
It honestly feels. Okay, Tortoise. Can I speak my truth?

SAGE
Yes. My love. The floor is yours.

BRENT
It feels like you cheated on me.

SAGE
Well, we're poly so it's not like-

TOMMY
Sage. Please. Don't disregard his feelings. *(To BRENT)* Can you speak about it more?

BRENT
Yes. It feels like I poured my fucking soul into this work, I mean the drafts I did? There were like, four. And you guys- you *people* just fucking took them and let some other director, some other set of eyes, some other MAN get in there and fuck on my pages. All that work, balled up

and just like, let someone else come in to the sacred temple? Without express permission?
Without talking about it as a group. It feels like you didn't think about me at all.

TOMMY

I understand. It felt, you felt, violated? By what we just did?

BRENT

Yes.

TOMMY

I can see that. Sage? Do you have something to add?

SAGE

Beenie, I'm sorry. We got caught up.

BRENT

Please...

SAGE *(moving to him, taking his hand)*

No, no, you listen. We didn't follow the rules. The rules we asked for in the first place. And we made the space dangerous. We made it harmful to you. We violated the agreement we set out at the beginning. And I'm immensely sorry.

TOMMY *(moving to his other side, taking his other hand)*

I'm sorry, too. I never meant to hurt you when not instructed to do so in an artistic sense.

(All three place their heads together. SAGE lightly kisses BRENT. Then TOMMY lightly kisses SAGE. Then TOMMY lightly kisses BRENT. They stand like that together.)

BRENT

Can we recollect our space? With trust?

TOMMY

Would you like to count all together?

SAGE

That would be great. To Seven?

(They close their eyes, breathe each other in. They are silent for several moments, then:)

TOMMY

One.

SAGE

Two.

TOMMY

Three.

BRENT

Four. (*A long beat.*) Five.

SAGE

Six.

TOMMY

Seven.

(They all open their eyes.)

BRENT

Thank you.

PETUNIA (*entering in a huff*)

All right, we gotta get going. Beenie, we're fucked every which way to Tuesday. Where do you wanna start?

BRENT (*smiling, at peace*)

I think...right at the beginning.

(Lights down. Time passes. Lights up. Later, in the middle of the technical rehearsal. BRENT sits in the front row, with the most serious "director" face a person can have. PETUNIA is in the technical booth, we do not see her, but we hear her voice. The stage is bare. Finally, a voice from the backstage.)

SAGE (*offstage*)

And I said to myself...what was I thinking?

(Suddenly the lights go disco. Strobes and neons and flashes. SAGE and TOMMY enter from opposite sides of the space. They both wear elaborate masks, although they are basically naked. One mask might be a knock-off of a Marvel character. Faintly, from far away, Laura Branigan's "Gloria" begins playing. They speak over the commotion.)

TOMMY

She was a poor girl. She wasn't thinking.

SAGE (*in a put upon voice*)

If my prospects were more fruitful, I could but only survive.

TOMMY

She struggled throughout the ages, but there was little to keep her afloat.

SAGE
I'm drowning! I'm drowning!

TOMMY
With as much as the men watched her go down the streets of merry old London, none came to call her on the weekends.

SAGE
Without a husband, I shall die a peasant.

TOMMY
A peasant!

SAGE
A peasant!-

(The music suddenly cuts. The actors try to continue but struggle to do so.)

PETUNIA *(offstage)*
Hold!

BRENT *(shouting back)*
What's up, Tunny?

PETUNIA
We have an issue-

(TYLER comes jogging onto stage from the booth, shielding his eyes.)

TYLER
We were pretty clear-/

BRENT
/Is there a problem?/

TYLER
/You can't use any music after 1632.

BRENT
Right, but it's integral to the piece-

TYLER
There are these things called ASCAP fees, and we can't afford to-/

BRENT

/No, I know what an ASCAP fee is-/

TYLER

/To just be playing any song anywhere. It was pretty clear in the contract. Section 14, Item S?/

BRENT

/I've done this before in this type of venue. This isn't my first festival-/

TYLER (*reading a contract*)

/"No music after the year 1632 can be used in your piece. Using music from after 1632 is punishable by disqualification of awards from the festival competition-/

BRENT

/I know what the contract says. I just also know that all of these venues have to pay ASCAP every year-/

TYLER

/Well we don't.

TOMMY

What even is this space? Not quite a theater, not quite a gymnasium.

SAGE

Can we-?

TYLER

Yeah, look, you just can't use the song. Plain and simple.

BRENT

How is anyone going to know this is supposed to be an ironic perspective on feminism, then?

TYLER

Look, I'm all about creative problem solving. I'm all for it. So let's work this out together, I'm happy to help.

BRENT

No. I mean, I appreciate it, but no. We can figure this out as a team.

TYLER (*smirking, holding up his hands*)

Sure thing.

BRENT

Tunny?

PETUNIA (*offstage in technical booth*)

Yeah, look, I just googled “top ten songs from 1632 with feminist roots” and came up bone-dry, amigo.

BRENT

Can we do it without sound?

PETUNIA

Does that read?

SAGE

Can I insert my thoughts into this environment at this time?

BRENT

Please.

SAGE

I feel, you know, if we’re really going to smack the audience in the head with this metaphor, we need music.

TOMMY

Do you feel open to an opposing opinion?

SAGE

Yes, my poppet.

TOMMY

I feel, just the way you’re embodying this character right now, really in touch with her pain, while also adding this just fantastic layer of self-awareness, the irony comes off. You’re really just *(makes a movement that seems to indicate she’s doing a good job)*.

SAGE

You swear?

TOMMY

I would never lie to you.

BRENT

Do we feel we could try it?

TYLER

You really should continue through the script. Your technical time is running out.

BRENT

Why?

TYLER

Well this is eating away at your time.

BRENT

Because you made us stop.

TYLER

I gotta be fair to everyone, you know? What's a world without fairness?

BRENT

Is there, I don't know, any way to make an exception?

TYLER

You can pay the overtime fee. That gives you an extra thirty minutes.

BRENT

What's the overtime fee?

TYLER

An extra hundred.

BRENT

A hundred??!

TYLER

Listen, you get it, I gotta be fair to everyone.

BRENT

Was everyone waylaid by some ASCAP nonsense?

TYLER

I gotta be fair. Can't be giving you extra time.

BRENT

Does our thirty minutes start before or after this conversation?

TYLER

When you pay.

BRENT (*aggressively reaching into his pocket and counting out 20s*)

Okay fine. Here. An extra thirty minutes.

TYLER (*counting cash and exiting quickly*)

Well, twenty-seven now.

BRENT

Wait, what-!

SAGE

So back from where we were before?

TOMMY

Did the masks read in the lights?

BRENT *(as impatient as it gets)*

Yes, they were fine. Back to one. Tunny?

PETUNIA *(offstage in technical booth)*

Actors to places for ironic feminist scene!

(SAGE and TOMMY head backstage. With the loudest sigh imaginable, BRENT retakes his seat. The lights go disco again. Strobes and neons and flashes. SAGE and TOMMY enter from opposite sides of the space. No music plays this time. They speak over the commotion.)

TOMMY

She was a poor girl. She wasn't thinking.

SAGE *(in a put upon voice)*

If my prospects were more fruitful, I could but only survive.

TOMMY

She struggled throughout the ages, but there was little to keep her afloat.

SAGE

I'm drowning! I'm drowning!

TOMMY

With as much as the men watched her go down the streets of merry old London, none came to call her on the weekends.

SAGE

Without a husband, I shall die a peasant.

TOMMY

A peasant!

(There's a loud sputtering, and we hear PETUNIA swear. The stage plunges into darkness.)

PETUNIA

Hold!

BRENT

Motherfuck-

(Lights down. Time passes. Lights up. Later, further into the technical rehearsal. BRENT sits in the front row, with the most serious “director” face a person can have. PETUNIA is in the technical booth, we do not see her, but we hear her voice. The stage is bare. Suddenly, TOMMY struts on with an acting block. He sits, doing the “thinker” position, then speaks.)

TOMMY

No one tells you you’ll be thinking about eels as much as you do. I didn’t know I’d be thinking about them at all, frankly. But there they are, all over the world. There are so few species that can live both on land and sea, fresh and salt water. Can you imagine a person living in all of those climates, those environments? There’s a reason you can’t. But back to the eels. Did you know that all eels in America and Europe travel to the Sargasso Sea every year to give birth? All eels are born in, literally, the Bermuda Triangle. Amongst the wrecks and the plane crashes and the lost souls. *(A beat.)* Eels might even be landlocked, but will travel ACROSS THE EARTH to get to the Sargasso Sea every year to breed. Eels won’t eat on this journey. That’s nothing like us. I have to stop and get a bag of Hot Fries before every road trip. My dad used to take me. Anyways. Back to the eels. They won’t eat on this trip, but instead will FEED ON THEIR OWN STOMACHS to survive. Imagine that. Millions of people die of starvation every year. But back to the eels. So these eels get to the Sargasso sea, and they give birth to all of these baby eels, which are freaky looking because they are translucent-

BRENT

Can we hold?

TOMMY

Did I mix up a line?

BRENT

No, you’re good. Tunny?

PETUNIA *(in technical booth)*

Yeah?

BRENT

Is that where we have the block? Does that read?

PETUNIA *(in technical booth)*

That’s where you had it for rehearsals.

BRENT

But is the metaphor for self-indulgence and narcissism reading with it like that?

PETUNIA *(in technical booth)*

You think the acting block is gonna help that read?

BRENT *(dead serious)*

Yes. Of course.

PETUNIA

Which direction does the block need to be facing in order for a metaphor of narcissism need to read?

BRENT/TOMMY (*in unison, obviously*)

Left.

PETUNIA (*in technical booth, flustered*)

Okay. So Tommy, go ahead and adjust that block however you want.

(*TOMMY moves the block barely an inch. It shouldn't even be obvious that he moved it at all.*)

BRENT

Wow. That's so much better.

TOMMY

Back from "translucent"-?

BRENT

Hang on. Tunny, can we spike that?

PETUNIA (*in technical booth*)

You need to?

TOMMY

It would be helpful.

BRENT

Does Tyler have the spike tape?

TYLER (*his voice coming from the back, startling everyone*)

There's black spike tape in the back. Each show gets two two-inch pieces to use, but there shouldn't be more than two pieces used per show.

TOMMY

It's black? The stage is black, too.

BRENT

Well we've already used two pieces to set the door.

TOMMY (*looking around*)

I can't even see those pieces anymore...

BRENT

Is there any way we could tear one of the two pieces we have already used to mark this block?

TYLER

Section 14 of the contract, item A.F says specifically-/

BRENT

/Okay! Okay! No worries! Tommy, you'll just have remember where the block goes.

TOMMY

It would be better if it was spiked, can we just peel one of the other spikes up and use that?

BRENT (*through gritted teeth*)

If you can find it, by all means.

(*A beat. TOMMY looks around, albeit not too diligently.*)

TOMMY

Nevermind.

BRENT

All right then.

TOMMY

But if the narcissism doesn't read, it's not my fault!

PETUNIA (*sarcastic, in technical booth*)

It'll read.

BRENT

Let's pick it up where we were.

TOMMY (*going back into the scene*)

- So these eels get to the Sargasso sea, and they give birth to all of these baby eels, which are freaky looking because they are translucent. Like clear fingers. And the parents, because they've

been starving for days or weeks or months to get to the Sargasso Sea, they just die. Like everyone does, I guess, but this time it's weirder because the Bermuda Triangle takes 1200 lives every year. I think. That statistic may be made up. But back to the eels. It's weirder because it's taking eel's lives. So these babies are without parents, are orphans, but they do not mourn. They do not fear for not having parents any longer. Instead, they travel back to the place where their parents came from. They do not know this place, they've never been there, but they just know.

Instinctively. They find their homes. They find their homes after the death. After the- (*he stumbles, blinks twice. He loses it.*) Line!/

BRENT (*flustered*)

/Really?/

TOMMY

/Sorry!/

PETUNIA (*reading, in technical booth*)

/"They find their homes after death. After the inevitable, great loss."

TOMMY
Thank you!

BRENT
Take it back one line. Get into it again. This is so, so important.

(A beat. He collects himself.)

TOMMY
They find their homes after the death. After the inevitable, great loss.

(A huge beat. TOMMY goes back to the "thinker" pose. It shouldn't be clear if the scene is over or not. Lights down. Time passes. Lights back up. Later on in the tech. SAGE and TOMMY are, inexplicably, covered in vines. They finish a scene.)

SAGE
Nobody told me that I could just. Be myself.

TOMMY
But isn't it wonderful? There you are.

SAGE
There I am.

(They stare at each other for like, way too long. So much so we are entirely sure if someone has forgotten a line. Suddenly, the lights fade. Then, they come back up. BRENT leaps to his feet, bursting into applause and whooping. SAGE and TOMMY. TYLER does his little jog thing out into the audience, clapping as well. PETUNIA calls out from the technical booth.)

PETUNIA
How was that, Brent?

BRENT
Brilliant work, Tunny, brilliant. And you two. My muses. Do it like that tonight and we are golden.

TYLER
Really into this. REALLY into this.

SAGE (*grabbing TOMMY and touching his forehead to hers*)
We were there and here and everywhere. You know?

TOMMY

I *felt the light inside of* it.

SAGE

You did.

BRENT

Right. Okay. Well I've got some notes. We are soooo close, you know? So let's take a five, I'll check in with Tunny, and then we'll, you, maybe run some other things?

(TYLER is picking his nails, so there is no answer from him.)

BRENT

All right. Well. Tunny, you ready for me?

(BRENT exits towards the technical booth. SAGE and TOMMY relax, either in the audience or the stage. TYLER checks to see BRENT is out of earshot, then quietly makes his way over to them.)

TYLER

Brava, brava.

SAGE

Oh. Thank you.

TYLER

The connection here is palpable. You two fuck?

SAGE

Whoa. Excuse me?

TYLER

I can tell. It's lovely. Fucking between actors is huge for the work.

SAGE

Wow. Tortoise.

TYLER

I'm sorry?

SAGE

I said "tortoise".

TYLER

I'm sure trutles fuck too.

TOMMY
She means-

TYLER
You, my man, you're doing some incredible work.

TOMMY (*ego starting to grow*)
Oh. Well. Thank you.

TYLER
I can tell you've trained with some of the best.

TOMMY
Thank you for noticing. Very few people acknowledge that.

TYLER
Well, we have to recognize each other when we can, you know? But the magnetism between you two. You've definitely shared some fluids.

SAGE
I don't feel comfortable with this line of questioning.

TYLER
I'm not being crass or anything, no impropriety here, just saying it's huge for the craft. I studied with David Geffen, and I gotta say-

TOMMY (*off guard*)
Wait, hold on, did you say David Geffen?

TYLER
Dave. David, yes.

TOMMY
You call him Dave??!

TYLER
We're old friends. I mean, he knows me. We have a facebook tet-a-tet. We poke each other back and forth.

SAGE
Is there still poking on facebook?

TOMMY
My god, I'd love to pick your brain. What's he like?

TYLER (*the most puffed up a person can be*)

Well Davey, you know, I took his online course in intimacy, this is before all the consent-nonsense, and his argument basically boils down to mutual masturbation.

TOMMY

Fascinating. To foster the connection-

TYLER

When our fluids connect, we connect.

TOMMY

You know in preparation for my view-points work, at NYU, New York University Tisch. The MFA program. I mean, there is a lot of literature out there about how the space shared between artists is just another person to take into consideration. It acts as much as the two people in the scene. So what can we do to help that other person, the space, and sometimes the best thing we can do is add to it. You know?

TYLER

Fascinating. Davey would say that was an apt observation. You're like, way ahead of your time.

TOMMY

That's just, like, amazing to hear.

TYLER

It all comes down to how can we get closer? How can we be better?/

SAGE

/I have an idea.../

TYLER

/So I think it's great you two are fucking.

TOMMY

Well, it's not without it's challenges.

SAGE

Tommy!

TOMMY

What?

SAGE

Don't, like, share that with him!

TOMMY

Sage, if I can be honest, that's not the vulnerability that I've come to expect from you. And that is incredibly disrespectful and disheartening.

SAGE

That's our private life!

TYLER

Davey would say there's nothing private between artists.

TOMMY

Sage, can this be a safe space?

SAGE

I don't want to take what we are experiencing outside this space into this space. We have serious work to do here.

TOMMY

There's nothing more serious than intimacy, Sage.

TYLER

Honey. Baby. Let's talk about this.

SAGE

Well-

TYLER (*turning a chair backwards and sitting in that weird way*)
Why don't we start with what happened? Where do we stand right now?

TOMMY (*to SAGE*)

Do you want to start or should I?

SAGE

/I don't feel comfortable-/

TOMMY

/Okay, I'll start. We fucked last night. Which we have been doing for awhile, but there was a word used, by Sage, that we said we never would, and now that we have it's changed things for us. And I've been trying to not focus on it but it's hard.

TYLER

What position were we using when we said this word?

TOMMY

I was being pegged.

TYLER

What is pegged?

TOMMY

It's when a male-presenting partner-

TYLER

What does that mean? What does "male-presenting" mean?

TOMMY

Someone who identifies as male. Like a trans-man or a cis-male.

TYLER

Can't keep up with the pronouns now. Alright so?

TOMMY

Right. The male-presenting partner is on their back and the female-presenting partner is standing and the penis or phallic item is being, like, fucked.

TYLER

Fascinating. I'll have to look that up. So, you're being "pegged", and Sage- what word did you say?

SAGE

Do you really have to be here for this?

TYLER

Sage, come now, you're too beautiful an actress to be this insecure. Fight that impulse.

SAGE (*her guard is let down totally involuntarily*)

Okay, fine. Christ. I said "I love you".

TYLER

Wow.

TOMMY

It's so hard to relive.

TYLER

And you have rules against this?

TOMMY

We said we would never expect each other to fall for each other.

TYLER

I understand.

TOMMY

I knew you would! We can connect with our bodies, but our hearts are so fragile, and if we put that on this, on the work, on our working relationship, that we put ourselves in a place of never being able to connect again.

TYLER

Loving puts you farther from each other. This makes total sense. Sage, maybe you can tell us why you said that to Tommy as you fucked him?

SAGE (*finally exploding, having not had a voice this whole time*)

Because I felt it! Okay? I fucking felt it! We were so connected, we were truly giving in to each other. We don't often get time just the two of us. There's always something between us, this space or a director or a stage manager or time or whatever, but this particular night, last night, it was just us. And *we* were just *us*. No inhibitions or falsehoods. And you were so gentle, Tommy. You took care of me. I had had such a hard day. Like, an audition didn't go well and my job took away one of my shifts so who knows if I can make rent this month and my mom was being a total cunt, like demanding I come home for Thanksgiving and guilt-tripping me with how much she misses me, and you just took me in your arms and said you could make it better. And you did make it better. Do you get that? You make me better. And for the past month while you were waiting to hear from NYU I felt you pulling away but last night you showed me just how close you are. You are my best friend, my muse, my baby. My bear. My sweets. And I realized. You're the first person I've ever loved. How can you not feel that? How can you not feel that way about me? With how vulnerable we are with one another? With how much we share? Do you remember the other day when you just, like, got me coffee before I woke up? Beenie doesn't do that. You're the only male I've had whose done that. And you just, like, did. How can you not see how confusing that is for me when you literally stop from cumming because I said "I love you"? How is this, what's between us, not love? If not love, then what the fuck are we doing here? Maybe my mom is right.

(*A beat. TYLER nods at nothing in particular.*)

TOMMY (*to TYLER*)

You see what I deal with here?

TYLER

I do.

SAGE

Wait-

TOMMY

I can't like, be the artist I want to be and be tied down, you know?

TYLER

Absolutely. What are you? A venus fly trap?

TOMMY

Even weaponizing your mother against me. That's like, so sick.

TYLER

My ex wife did the exact same thing. It's the primary reason we aren't together anymore. That, and tax evasion.

TOMMY

You fucking said it!

TYLER

Do you hear him, Sage? Do you see his point?

SAGE

But what I felt was-

TYLER

Frankly, we can't take your feelings into account here.

TOMMY

Exactly. This is the relationship, not the individuals.

TYLER

Dave would've said the exact same thing.

TOMMY

David Geffen would've said the same thing, Sage. Do you see that? What this does to our art?

SAGE

Why the fuck would I care what David Geffen says about how I feel about you?

TYLER/TOMMY

Whoa/Fuck!/Hold up now.

TOMMY

That's like. Wow. How could you? You know how much his work means to me!

TYLER

I'm insulted on behalf David.

TOMMY

I need to like, not be near you right now.

TYLER

Take your time, Tom. Take your time from this. Space.

TOMMY

Right. Space.

SAGE

Wait.

(BRENT re-enters.)

BRENT

All right, we are good with Tunny. You guys ready to get real with some notes?

(There's silence from the group. The Lights fade. Time passes. Sometime later, not quite showtime yet. BRENT walks into the space. PETUNIA enters from the technical booth.)

PETUNIA

Are we on break?

BRENT

They're running lines back there, and ya know, internalizing or whatever.

PETUNIA

Fucking actors.

BRENT

Fucking actors is right. Are we good up there?

PETUNIA

I think I found a sonata that will work. Tyler said we won't be able to run it again but maybe it's worth asking again.

BRENT

All right.

PETUNIA

In the meantime, I'm gonna run out and get a fucking dongle thing because he says we can't use his personal one for the show. He says he has one but he's not "willing to loan it out to anyone".

BRENT

Why not?

PETUNIA

All of my energy is going into not asking that question.

BRENT
All right.

PETUNIA
You want anything while I'm out?

BRENT
I'm good.

PETUNIA
Back in five!

(PETUNIA exits through the theatre doors. BRENT is left alone, seemingly. BRENT walks into the space, glancing backstage, taking stock of the audience. He smiles, practices his bow (he won't be bowing, so it's not immediately clear why he's doing this). He practices a curtain speech.)

BRENT
I want to thank you all so much for coming tonight. This work has been a real labor of love, and there's so many people involved, who sacrificed so much to be here. This story is deeply personal, deeply emotional for me to share, and so I can't say enough how grateful I am of everyone who contributed to our Kick Starter and supported our show in various ways. I gotta say, this piece speaks volumes about our society and the world we live in. It was a struggle, each and every day, but these incredible artists who you're going to see today, or, I mean, tonight, showed up ready to work. We tapped into something so visceral here-

(TYLER enters mid-rant.)

TYLER *(somehow wildly angry)*
/We gotta talk about our set needs here! *(notices what he was doing)* Oh, sorry to interrupt./

BRENT
/That's- no, it's fine, it's okay. What do you need?/

TYLER
/I remember doing that in my mirror as a kid./

BRENT
/Something about the set?/

TYLER
/I'd hold up this trophy my dad had for bowling, real stand-up guy, salt of the earth, you know?/

BRENT
/Our? Did you say Our?/

TYLER

/I wanna thank the Academy for this honor. And to the guys in my category: Leo, Brad, Daniel, you guys keep me humble. I grow because I know-/

BRENT

/What award are you accepting there?

TYLER

Best Actor. I'd get nominated for the SAG and lose. But those are entirely political, you know.

BRENT

Did you need me for something?

TYLER

God. I wish I could be in your shoes right now.

BRENT

What do you mean?

TYLER

Seeing my work for the first time, ever? That's a very special day.

BRENT

Well I mean, yeah, but I've done readings and stuff of my work before-

TYLER

Yeah, but a full production? Baby. That's fresh. That's real. And with so much at stake? I mean, our fabulous cash prizes are right there. Think of what you can do when...I guess, I should say, if you win.

BRENT

Oh. You real think we could-?

TYLER

Your material is electric. Light but dense. Fluffy but thought-provoking. True but so, so, so false.

BRENT

Huh.

TYLER

If I could go back in time and do it all again? Baby I would.

BRENT

What happened? I mean, the first time you had a work performed?

TYLER

Oh, that's a good story. It's like, right there, in my brain's eye. It happened in a theatre just like this. So magical. You know, the dirtiest theatres are the best. Nothing commercial, that's where the real art happens. In dirty, dirty theatres. I was probably your age, maybe older, maybe younger. And I just remember, seeing that audience leap to their feet, thunderous applause, and I had never felt so full. I was brimming, you know? I bet you know.

BRENT

I think I do.

TYLER

You know what happened, though? What brought me here?

BRENT

What's that?

TYLER

Money. You sell out. You have to survive. This city doesn't do for artists what we want it to. There's just, no support system anymore. I'm sure you know.

BRENT

I definitely do.

TYLER

You have a real future here. I wish someone had said that to me when I started out. When I was your age. Maybe older, maybe younger.

BRENT

Do you think you'd, I don't know, do it differently?

TYLER

I don't know. Can't live in the past, you know?

BRENT

Well I don't want to regret any of it.

TYLER

Can't! Can't regret any of it!

BRENT

So is that why you started this festival? For the money you could offer?

TYLER

Definitely for the money. I want to support the next group of artists. They deserve it. *You* deserve it.

BRENT
It's definitely admirable.

TYLER
Well. You deserve it. Your work deserves it.

(A beat. TYLER stares off into the space. He's living in the past right now. Finally, BRENT coughs.)

BRENT
So. You said something about the set?

TYLER
Right, yes. Good memory. We gotta talk about what you're using.

BRENT
Okay?

TYLER
Section 42 of the contract you signed, you'll remember, was about set dressing and props, and I'm looking in the bags of stuff you have back there, you got too much. We got too much going on.

BRENT
What do you mean?

TYLER *(reading a contract)*
"Section 42, part F: Shows selected for the festival and paid fully are permitted one square foot of backstage space to store props and any additional set dressings they may require. Show may not exceed one square foot backstage for storage. You are permitted two (2) set pieces from our catalogue for your show. If you exceed the number of set pieces, you will be disqualified from an financial prizes for our finalists. You may also incur an additional fees for each set piece or additional square foot used backstage." I think it's pretty clear.

BRENT
Well, we're sorry, we just thought it was like, you know a suggestion. Don't have too much stuff. But we can definitely consolidate-

TYLER
Well the thing is, where you've put your stuff, it's pretty clear you're already taking up the space. You're already taken up the space. So the violation has already happened.

BRENT
Listen, Tyler, I'm sure we can come to some sort of agreement here-

TYLER

And with the violation, I gotta take this into real consideration, because woof-

BRENT

I'm looking backstage and I don't see any other show's items or props or sets. Isn't everyone already loaded in? Like, what if there's space that hasn't been used?

TYLER

If I make the exception for you all, I gotta make it for everyone, ya know?

BRENT

Right. But who is "everyone"?!

TYLER

Listen, I'd be willing to not disqualify you guys from the whole she-bang, but I gotta charge you the fee. Fair's fair.

BRENT

Okay. What is the fee.

TYLER

One hundred for each additional set piece and square foot.

BRENT

...that's an expensive square foot of real estate.

TYLER

Inflation. Thanks Obama.

BRENT (*pulling out bills from his pockets, he clearly doesn't have much left*)

Okay, well we will take one more square foot. And we won't have to winnow down our set dressings?

TYLER (*taking the money, immediately pocketing it*)

This should about do it. But hey, since I'm being nice, you know, a fifty would go a long way to making sure the judges don't hear about the infraction.

(*A beat. BRENT stares at him.*)

BRENT

Are you trying to get me to bribe-?

TYLER

I'm kidding! Jeez, your generation can't take a joke anymore. What kind of festival do you think I'm running here?

BRENT

Sorry, it was unclear-

TYLER

All right, so. You guys are using the acting block, great choice by the way, made it myself, and what else?

BRENT

The door frame.

TYLER

Great. We will get those backstage for you. And nothing else, right?

BRENT

You just said we could only use two?

TYLER

A test! Great job, you passed!

BRENT

Okay. Then yes, those two.

TYLER

Did you watch our youtube video on the set items and props we offer? What'd you think?

BRENT

Oh, I mean I just read the description and found what we needed based on the script.

TYLER

Oh you gotta watch it. I did the videography for it. I don't often step behind the camera, but when I do, man, I soar. I'll send you a link.

BRENT

Okay?

TYLER

Ooof, Ty-Ty hungry. Gotta go grab some noodles with peanut sauce. Can I get you an order? On me.

BRENT

I'm fine thanks.

TYLER (*starting to exit*)

Alrighty. Consolidate those props when you can.

BRENT
You just said-!

(TYLER is already gone. BRENT shakes his head. He looks back out at the audience, decides to try again.)

BRENT
I want to thank you all so much for coming tonight. This work has been a real labor of love, and there's so many people involved, who sacrificed so much to be here. This story is deeply personal, deeply emotional for me to share, and so I can't say enough how grateful I am of everyone who contributed to our Kick Starter and-

TYLER *(appearing out of nowhere)*
Seriously, I'd kill to be in your shoes again. Butterfly. Best days ahead, you know?

BRENT *(shaken...where the fuck did he come from?)*
Right.

TYLER
And I'd cut that last part. No need to thank anyone who held ya back, you know?

BRENT
Okay.

TYLER
Man. I wish I had someone like me when I was coming up. Things could've been so much different.

BRENT
Different. Right.

(TYLER exits again. BRENT looks after him. He shudders. Lights down. Lights up, a little while later. PETUNIA and TOMMY sit in the audience, seemingly before calltime. PETUNIA goes over a set of cues with TOMMY.)

PETUNIA
You're just not getting it right.

TOMMY
Tunny, I *do* get it, I just don't care.

PETUNIA
Well we need you to care, because we won't have another chance to go over it. So, here it is again-

TOMMY

Tunny, stop being so uptight.

PETUNIA
That's quite literally my job.

TOMMY
I said I GET IT.

PETUNIA
Then repeat it to me.

TOMMY
This is so condescending-

PETUNIA
Tommy, please, just repeat it back to me.

TOMMY (blowing up)
I go "did you see him staring at you in the hallway? Did you see it?" Then the lights change, then
I shout-

PETUNIA
WRONG.

TOMMY
That's what you just said!

PETUNIA
No it's not.

TOMMY
What did I get wrong?

PETUNIA
Your line is "did you see him staring at you in the hallways? DIDN'T you see HIM?" then the
lights change.

TOMMY
That's what I fucking said.

PETUNIA
It's not. You said "DID you see IT" which is not the same, and it's not my cue.

TOMMY
They mean the same thing!

PETUNIA

But it's not the line, Tommy. Say the line correctly.

TOMMY

I can't with this bullshit right now.

PETUNIA

It's not bullshit, it's a cue line. And if there was anything so important to get right-

TOMMY

You are such a stickler for this stuff.

PETUNIA

Because I have to be!

TOMMY

Don't you care about the art? The feel of it?

PETUNIA

I care that I know when the lights are supposed to fucking come up.

TOMMY

Denzel Washington would say you're a modern convenience that's actually an inconvenience.

PETUNIA

I don't think I can convey how little of a shit I give about what Denzel Washington would say.

TOMMY

All this technical nonsense, it just gets in the way.

PETUNIA

You do your part, and I'll do mine.

TOMMY

I'm trying but you keep getting in my way.

PETUNIA

Tommy, I'm gonna tell you this because no one else here will: getting into NYU has made you the biggest asshole on the planet.

(TOMMY stands stunned. He goes to walk away, but then turns back as if he could say something. He decides against it. He turns away again only to immediately turn back, his mouth agape. He turns away again. He does it all a third time, finally PETUNIA screams.)

PETUNIA

Oh my god, speak or leave!

TOMMY
I have no words.

PETUNIA
I'm so relieved to hear you say that.

TOMMY
I can't work like this with you!

PETUNIA
Can we please go over it again?

TOMMY (*flustered*)
Do you believe I can do it?

PETUNIA
Yes. Yes of course. Do you want the line again?

TOMMY
"Didn't you see him!"

PETUNIA
Good. And the sequence goes?

TOMMY
I go "did you see him staring at you in the hallway? Did you see it?" Then the lights change, then
I shout "how could you not have seen him?"

(*A beat.*)

TOMMY
Thank you so much Tunny, I think I really nailed it.

PETUNIA
No! You absolutely did not.

TOMMY
What're you talking about??

PETUNIA
You said-

TOMMY (*blowing up again*)
Have we considered the possibility that I just may not be able to get this?

PETUNIA

But you can, we just talked through it-

TOMMY

Tunny I can't work like this. It's too hard. You're making it too hard.

PETUNIA

Tommy!

TOMMY

Say I'm not an asshole.

PETUNIA

Excuse me?

TOMMY

If you want me to be able to do this you have to say I'm not an asshole.

PETUNIA

Why would I do that when you're acting just like an asshole??

TOMMY

Do you want me to walk? Or do you want me to perform?

PETUNIA

Do you want to get the cue right?

TOMMY

How could you be so cruel, Tunny? How could you?

PETUNIA

This! This is what I'm talking about Tommy. You are so dramatic. You think everything is about you, you think you deserve everything. We all have to make space for you. We all have get out of your way. This isn't just about you. Do you realize what we are even doing here? The story we are trying to tell? We have been working on this process for over four months, and it's never *not* been about you. We are supposed to be a team. A fucking team. And you keep taking the lead spot. You don't even share the stage! You're so bad at it! And it didn't used to be this way. It didn't used to be this horrible. You were sweet, giving, honest. You wanted to be up there with other people. And now it's like, if you have to give even a little room to someone else, you fucking lose it. And what's worse? You justify it for "the art". You say it's because others are getting in your way. You shouldn't have a fucking way, Tommy! You shouldn't need a way! And it's not just onstage when you're acting. It's every room you walk into. It's every fucking place you go. You carry this air with you like you don't want to be there, but also like you're the best thing that could've happened to the space? How do you even do that? How do you keep those two ideas in your head? Do you understand what you're doing to all of us? Do you

understand what you're doing to me? (*A beat.*) You used to be gentle. You'd tuck my hair back behind my ear and tell me how special I was. How important I was. You don't do that anymore. You question everything. You're always on the verge of a blow up. And what's worse? You're always performing. You're always doing something for an audience. Like someone is watching. Not everyone is watching you all the time. Not everyone cares how you appear or what you look like or how you're acting. Not everyone notices when you come into a room. You know who thinks that way? An asshole. An NYU-graduate with an MFA in assholery.

(*A long beat. TOMMY appears practically unaffected, until suddenly: he bursts in deep, deep sobs. He cries so hard it sounds like he might pass out. PETUNIA just watches. She doesn't know how to respond. Finally, she goes to him.*)

PETUNIA (*this is thousandth time she's done this*)
Hey. Hey. Okay. There-there.

TOMMY (*in between sobs*)
I'm. So. Sorry!

PETUNIA
Easy now.

TOMMY (*truly gasping for air*)
I never. Meant. To be. This. Way.

PETUNIA
I know. But now you know. And that's good.

TOMMY
I can't. Change

PETUNIA
But you can! You weren't that way before!

TOMMY
But. What if. I. CAN'T.

PETUNIA
We're gonna help you.

TOMMY
I'm. So. Sad. All the time.

PETUNIA
And I could tell.

TOMMY

Please. Don't. Leave. Me.

PETUNIA

I'm not going anywhere. Just. You know. Be better.

TOMMY

I promise. I will. Be.

PETUNIA

Okay good.

(In the most dramatic way possible. TOMMY let's out the deepest of sighs and shakes out his tears. It's entirely unclear if he'd been crying at all.)

TOMMY

Can you say I'm not an asshole? Please?

PETUNIA

Yes. Okay. You're not an asshole.

TOMMY

And I'm doing a good job?

PETUNIA

Yes, you're doing a great job.

TOMMY

Just a "great" job?

PETUNIA

A fantastic job.

TOMMY

And my family is going to like it?

PETUNIA

Yes, your family is going to love it.

(They kiss because that's how toxic this situation is.)

TOMMY

You make me a better artist.

PETUNIA

Don't I know it.

TOMMY
I should go run lines. Will you grab me a coke?

PETUNIA
Anything for you.

(TOMMY exits backstage. As he does, SAGE enters from the other side. PETUNIA doesn't see her.)

SAGE
That went about as well as it could've.

PETUNIA
Oh. Hey. I didn't see you there.

SAGE
Don't grab him the fucking coke.

PETUNIA
Then I'll never hear the end of "how I didn't care for in his hour of need".

SAGE *(moving to her)*
But what if *I* need you?

PETUNIA
Oh, I'll do whatever for you. Always.

(A beat.)

PETUNIA
Why do we keep doing this for them?

SAGE
Because what else is there to do?

PETUNIA
Do we love them?

SAGE
I don't know if I know what love is.

PETUNIA
I know what I feel towards you.

SAGE
And what I feel towards you.

(A beat.)

PETUNIA

I was glad. When you told me last night. After you left his room, I was so. Fucking happy. You came to see me.

SAGE

I've wanted to say it to you for so long.

PETUNIA

I trip every time you come into the living room.

SAGE

Sometimes I have a hard time not making eye contact with you. I wait all day for you to look at me.

(A beat.)

PETUNIA

You're going to be great tonight.

SAGE

Will we win?

PETUNIA

We're sandwiched between a one-man show about masturbation and a DJ set known as "experimental musical theatre", I'd say we have a good shot.

SAGE

As long as Tommy gets the cue right.

PETUNIA

Right.

SAGE

My parents are in tomorrow.

PETUNIA

I knew that.

SAGE

They want to meet you.

PETUNIA

Are they meeting Tommy?

SAGE
No.

PETUNIA
Brent?

SAGE
No way. Fucker.

PETUNIA
Just me?

SAGE
Just you. You're the only one I want them to meet.

PETUNIA
Well then.

SAGE
You're okay with that?

PETUNIA
You say you don't know what real love is, but it's pretty clear you do.

SAGE
I know. It's hard to say it.

PETUNIA
Me too.

(A beat.)

SAGE
He is a fucking asshole.

PETUNIA
The biggest.

SAGE
Hey?

PETUNIA
Yeah?

SAGE
Want to do a warm up with me?

PETUNIA
I don't really need to warm up.

SAGE
Come on. For me.

PETUNIA
Counting?

SAGE
Yeah. Close your eyes. To ten.

(Neither of them close their eyes. They stare directly at each other.)

SAGE
One.

PETUNIA
Two.

SAGE
Three.

PETUNIA
Four.

SAGE
Five.

(A long beat. It's charged.)

PETUNIA
Six.

SAGE
Seven.

PETUNIA
Eight.

SAGE
Nine.

(Another long beat. Sparks fly.)

PETUNIA & SAGE

Ten.

(They stay staring at each other.)

SAGE

Hey?

PETUNIA

Yeah?

SAGE

I love you. But just as an warm up.

PETUNIA

I love you too. But just as a warm up.

(PETUNIA and SAGE kiss. It's entirely different from any other kiss that has happened so far. This one is real.)

PETUNIA

Go kick ass, circus freak.

SAGE

You too, shadow monster.

(They part, holding hands until they can't anymore. Lights down. Time passes. Lights back up. Almost immediately before the house opens for the company's opening show. SAGE and TOMMY are doing physical warm ups on stage. PETUNIA carries a few props back and forth between the offstage sides. Finally, BRENT enters wearing a blazer. He looks snazzier, if not forcing it a little.)

BRENT

Company! Company, come together please. Tunny, you too.

(They gather.)

BRENT

Well, how do we feel? *(No one answers)* Great. Folks, this is it. This is what we have been working towards. There are so many folks out there right now. We have put our heart and soul into this piece, and I can't thank you enough. Seriously. And on a personal note-/

TYLER

/All right little babies it's showtime!/
/

BRENT

/Oh, uh-

TYLER

Oh sorry little fella, were you talking? I gotta address these guys. (*Looking BRENT up and down*)

Brad, baby, you look great. Nice little blazer you got there. You go to the Baby-GAP down the street? I'm just kidding I'm just yanking your chain I'm joshing you Budd-o. So guys. Listen up.

We got a great crowd out there, and they are very, very excited to see your work. Even if it's only 11 people, you can feel how happy they are to see this, to feel this, to hear this. I gotta say, personally, it's been an honor to watch what you've created. And thank you for indulging my little notes. Remember that intensity? Keep it up tonight, you know. And let's keep on our lines, right? Let's watch that pacing? But most of all, just have fun, you know? Just really dig in and leave it all out there on the pitch, you know? Make me proud. (*seeing BRENT again*) And how about this guy here, huh? His words. God. Best thing I've smelled since sliced bread. Little play that could, amirite? Okay let's hit places, huh? Patsy, you wanna say anything?

BRENT

Oh, I mean I'd like to, you know address-

TYLER

Oooh, we gotta open house, Broseph Stalin. So let's do it. Patricia, meet you in the booth. Let's go house lights down, yeah? (*To TOMMY*) Hey? David would be impressed.

(*TOMMY does this sort of hold-his-heart thing. TYLER does his little jog off to the house doors. PETUNIA looks at BRENT, shakes her head, then heads towards the booth.*)

SAGE/TOMMY (*holding each other, pressing their foreheads into each other*)

And I. Will hold. You up.

(*They both start to exit offstage to their places.*)

BRENT (*to no one in particular*)

Okay. Break a leg.

(*The lights go down. We hear the mingling of the audience, although it's not entirely clear how many people actually have attended the performance. When the lights come up again, we see the same scene they rehearsed at the very beginning of the show. They are as close as TYLER suggested.*)

SAGE

I've been giving it a lot of thought.

TOMMY

You've been giving it a lot of thought?

SAGE

You are so distant from me.

TOMMY

You're wrong.

SAGE

I wish you'd look at me.

TOMMY

Are you even here?

SAGE (*changed*)

I couldn't be closer to you.

TOMMY

Well maybe if you saw me more clearly.

SAGE

I've tried to see all of you, but every time you move further away.

TOMMY (*affected*)

I couldn't be closer to you.

SAGE

How do you lie so well through your teeth?

TOMMY

Call me a liar one more time, bitch.

SAGE

I could fuck your brains out right now.

TOMMY

Well then let's do it.

(TOMMY starts to get effected during the below. It should be clear he's reliving last night.)

SAGE

You feel so good in me.

TOMMY

I can't believe how tight you are.

SAGE

If you don't cum on me I'll die.

TOMMY (*on the verge of tears*)
Say my name.

SAGE
Say my name.

TOMMY (*now sobbing*)
Say my name.

SAGE
Say my name.

TOMMY (*almost involuntarily*)
I love you so fucking much.

(There's a long beat. Someone coughs in the audience. TOMMY is shaken by what has just happened. He starts to stumble on his lines.)

TOMMY
But I couldn't just sit there- (*he coughs, shakes his head, starts again*) I couldn't just sit there
and let her- (*He fumbling, looks around, hopes for help*) I couldn't just-

(SAGE reaches up and puts her hand on her arm. She takes over.)

SAGE
He couldn't just sit there and let me take what had always been mine. He needed a piece for
himself. A piece that I wouldn't share. He knew it and I knew it. (*A beat. She swallows,*
continues.) But we would never say that to each other. It would always be this way. I would
always suffer because it was my fault that I had said anything at all. But then whose truth hurt
more? Whose lie was more important to be told?

(TOMMY looks at her. It's not entirely clear if the next part is scripted or not.)

TOMMY
I'm sorry.

SAGE
It's not your fault.

TOMMY
We could've been-

SAGE
Yeah, but we weren't.

TOMMY
Hey?

SAGE
Yeah?

TOMMY
I would've chosen you in every lifetime.

SAGE
Even this one?

TOMMY
Always this one.

(A beat between them. Lights down. Time passes. Lights back up. The show has ended. BRENT stands at the door, saying final goodbyes to someone.)

BRENT
I can't thank you enough for coming, seriously-

(PETUNIA enters in a huff.)

PETUNIA
Beenie-

BRENT *(to PETUNIA)*
Hang on *(back out the door)* seriously, it means so much. Yup. Yup. The bar right down the street. I'll get these crazy kooks there in a sec, just wanna touch base with them first. No- no sorry, it's cash only. Yeah. There's an ATM right next door./

PETUNIA
/Beenie!/

BRENT
/Hang on! *(back out the door, louder)* Thanks again!!! *(to PETUNIA)*
What?!

PETUNIA
Remember how there were supposed to be judges?

BRENT
What're you talking about?

PETUNIA

The competition! The prizes that Tyler was talking about. Weren't there supposed to be judges?

BRENT

Yeah, they were here weren't they?-

(SAGE and TOMMY come out holding hands. TOMMY looks stricken, almost ill.)

BRENT

AH! My muses. My loves. My voices. You two were just *chef's kiss*-

PETUNIA

/You can just do the action, you don't have to say "chef's kiss"-/

BRENT

/The energy was just, fucking, palpable. You know? Just fucking there. You were both so in it.

SAGE

It felt, really, really good.

TOMMY *(stricken)*

Right.

BRENT

Now we gotta talk about the new ending. I loved it, I did, but were they my words? I don't remember that draft.

TOMMY

It was something else.

SAGE

Something else.

PETUNIA *(upset)*

What kind of "something else"?

BRENT

I think you're right, though, Sage. That monologue makes more sense from your point of view. Just something to explore, you know? We can play with it. We can play with it.

SAGE

It's all because of this guy, right here- sorry, this *person* right here. Really brought me there. He carried me on his eagle's wings.

PETUNIA *(as angry as can be)*

Well. That's great.

TOMMY
Yeah.

BRENT (*to TOMMY*)
You alright?

TOMMY (*no*)
Yes.

PETUNIA
Beenie, about the judges-

SAGE
What judges?

BRENT
We are being judged by a panel, and they were here tonight! Which is great.

PETUNIA
No.

TOMMY
No it's not great?

PETUNIA
No they weren't here.

BRENT
What're you talking about? They had tickets set aside.

PETUNIA
And they never showed up!

BRENT
Well maybe you read it wrong.

PETUNIA (*producing her phone*)
No! Look at this email from when we were accepted to the festival- it says right here, "our panel of judges will attend your opening night". (*produces a piece of paper*) I've got the box office list here for the next two runs, and look! No judges' comps. What the hell happened?

BRENT
Why're you looking at me? I have no idea! Maybe Tyler is on the panel.

SAGE
That's like, a huge conflict of interest. He can't possible be impartial.

TOMMY

Well let's not lay any malice on the guy-

SAGE

He's not here, Tommy, you can hop off his dick.

TOMMY

I'm not on his *dick*.

SAGE

You have his dick so far down your throat I can barely understand you.

TOMMY

How can I be "on his dick" and "have his dick in my mouth".

SAGE

You're incredibly versatile.

TOMMY

I could be if you'd fucking let me!

BRENT

Okay, time out on whatever the fuck this is.

PETUNIA (*to BRENT*) You gotta ask him.

BRENT

Who?

PETUNIA

Tyler! He can tell you what's going on.

BRENT

I really don't wanna talk to that guy again, he's such a weirdo.

PETUNIA

A weirdo whose festival we paid \$500 to be apart of, and whose prizes we won't be eligible for if the judges who are in charge of picking the finalists never show up to see it!

BRENT

All right! I'll talk to him!

(*A beat.*)

SAGE
What're you waiting for?

BRENT
We just have like, a lot of people waiting for us at the bar down the street, I don't wanna keep them waiting.

TOMMY
Beenie, go now!

SAGE
What if they don't come tomorrow? What if they don't come to the last show? Then what?

BRENT
Fine! But I swear to god if he gives me a note on the play I'm going to punch him.

PETUNIA
Go!

(BRENT walks over the backstage area, while PETUNIA, SAGE, and TOMMY watch. He looks around, finally calls out to TYLER.)

BRENT
Uhh... Tyler?

TYLER *(appearing from truly nowhere, we should not have any clue where he came from)*
Yeah? Hey! You guys did great, seriously, great job. Better than sparkling water.

BRENT
Can I talk to you for a sec?

TYLER
Absolutely. Make it a hot sec though because I got the next crew coming in, and they have a water feature in their show.

BRENT
Ah. Wait. Where are they storing a water feature? Don't we all get one square foot backstage?

TYLER
Hey, exceptions are expected in the theatre.

BRENT
Right. Whatever. Okay, so I have to ask- this is a competition, you know, and we were, I mean Tunnie, Petunia, our stage manager, was looking over some of the documentation we got, and it

says we, you know, each show I mean, we were gonna have judges. You know come? And it specifically says on opening night, and you know we're checking the box office sales for the next two performances and I'm not seeing any comps, and really it's no big deal or anything, but like I was wondering if you are serving in their, you know, stead, or if maybe they just aren't showing on the box office report or, I don't know. Just wanted to check on that.

(There's a solid beat. TYLER's entire demeanor shifts. This may not even be the same person we saw before. Something comes over him.)

TYLER

You're NOT allowed to ask me that.

BRENT

I'm sorry?

TYLER

That's a big no-no.

BRENT

No, I meant, excuse me?

TYLER

You're not allowed to ask me that.

BRENT

About the judges?

TYLER

Yes.

BRENT

Wait. I feel like maybe you misunderstood, I'm not accusing you-

TYLER

You better not be.

BRENT

I'm not. I'm saying, how are we eligible for prizes if the judges panel never showed up?

TYLER

You are really, really, not allowed to ask me that.

BRENT

I'm sorry; I fully do not understand what's happening right now.

TYLER

You read over your contract?

BRENT

What does the contract have to do with anything?

TYLER

Section 10, "The Competition". You want me to read it to you?

BRENT

I don't need you to-

TYLER (*pulling out a sheet and doing it anyways*)

/Well I'm gonna fucking read it. Section 10, "The Competition", part B2- This is a competition, with fabulous prizes. Your entry fee pays not only for the venue rental, but also the many cash prizes we offer to our finalists./

BRENT

/Yes, I get all that. But the judges-/

TYLER

/It goes on: "You are not allowed to ask what criteria, how, and when the judging process takes place. We don't have to tell you how you will be judged."

(*A beat.*)

BRENT

Say that again.

TYLER

We don't have to tell you how you will be judged.

BRENT

So we can't ask you how, despite a panel of judges not coming to our show, how we will be judged for this competition that we paid to enter into.

TYLER

Exactly.

BRENT

Well. That's pretty confusing. If I can offer some feedback.

TYLER (*absent-mindedly*)

It doesn't matter anyways.

BRENT

What do you mean?

TYLER

It doesn't apply to your show anyways.

BRENT

Oh. So. We get an exception?

TYLER

No, there's no exceptions. I'm saying it doesn't matter because you were disqualified.

(A beat.)

BRENT

Excuse me?

TYLER

You were disqualified from the competition.

BRENT

Because I asked about the judges? Look I think we can sort this out-

TYLER

No, of course not. I'm not going to qualify you for some menial thing like asking a question. You're disqualified because your show went over the time limit.

BRENT

Wait, no, that can't be possible.

TYLER

I took the official time from lights up to lights down, and-

BRENT

I timed us so many times, we were always at 34 minutes. And that includes bows!

TYLER

Well tonight you were at 37 and a half minute.

(A beat.)

BRENT

37 and a half?

TYLER

Official rules stipulate that you can't go over the time you give us when you are accepted to the festival. I have here that you put down 35 minutes. Lights up to lights down.

BRENT
How did we get to 37 minutes?

TYLER
Was anything added tonight by your actors?

(A beat. BRENT realizes.)

BRENT
What am I supposed to tell them?

TYLER
Who? Your actors?

BRENT
Yes?

TYLER
I would lie.

BRENT
Lie?

TYLER
Yeah. They're used to it. They lie all the time. To each other, to you, onstage. That's what this whole business was about. Just lying. Just tell them something made up. Anything to make them feel better.

BRENT
And there's **nothing** you can do?

TYLER
I gotta be fair to the other participants. You know?

BRENT
What's it going to take?

TYLER
What do you mean?

BRENT
How much?

TYLER
Money? Ha! What do you think of me?

(A beat.)

BRENT

We thought. Sorry. We thought this was a huge opportunity for us. The money, and the judges, and the space. We just. Really wanted this to be the thing that took us somewhere.

TYLER

Maybe it will be. Someday. But today I gotta ask you to vacate the space so I can get ready for the next show.

BRENT

So I just lie?

TYLER *(entirely too nonchalant about it)*

It's pretty easy.

BRENT

Okay.

TYLER

And hey, you gotta submit to us again. Your writing? Woo daddy! You gotta a gift kiddo. Send me anything else you got.

BRENT

Right. Okay.

TYLER

And break legs on your next two shows!

(TYLER exits backstage. BRENT stands there, totally defeated. He decides, and turns back to the group.)

BRENT

Right.

SAGE

What did he say?

BRENT

They're gonna come another night. Maybe tomorrow.

PETUNIA

Yeah?

BRENT

Yeah! Let's go grab that drink. First round is on me.

TOMMY

Thank GOD because I have like twelve dollars in my bank account.

(They all begin to exit through the audience doors.)

SAGE

Can we all, just like, spend the night in one bed together tonight? I feel like we have so much to talk about.

PETUNIA

I need a night away from you people. Today was very long, wasn't it?

(And they're gone. BRENT lingers, staring back at the space, he looks like he could cry. Then, suddenly he bursts into laughter.)

BRENT *(smiling the biggest he can, because he loves it)*

Fuck this.

(Lights down. End of play.)